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Some fourteen or fifteen years ago M. Durkheim, then Professor at the University of Bordeaux, commenced the publication of *L'Année Sociologique* in collaboration with members of the sociological school which had arisen under his inspiration; but hitherto in the department of anthropological study dedicated to religion, though single monographs of great value had appeared, no general synthesis had been attempted of principles and of the results to which they lead. M. Durkheim himself was obviously the proper authority to undertake this work, without which the sociological school [92] could not hope to exercise any permanent influence on the direction of anthropological study. In this brilliant volume recently issued, not merely has he produced an example of the sociological method of investigation of savage phenomena, but he has formulated a philosophy. Whether the method and the philosophy will ultimately be accepted by anthropologists remains to be seen; but there can be no difference of opinion on the importance of the volume. It opens a new chapter in the discussion of the origin of religion, and must for many a day be the starting point of controversy.

A religion, according to M. Durkheim, is a system of beliefs and practices inseparably bound up together *(solidaire)*[1] relative to sacred—that is to say, separated, forbidden—things, beliefs and

practices which unite into one moral community, called a Church, all those who adhere to them. The idea of Religion is thus inseparable from the idea of Church, for Religion is eminently and essentially a collective affair. It is distinguished from magic, which makes use of similar machinery, even including a cult, because magic is not collective but individualist in its aims and practices: there is no magical Church. A cult is a system of rites, solemn seasons *(fêtes)*[2], and ceremonies, all presenting one invariable characteristic that they recur periodically. This definition, perhaps, hardly takes account of the fact that many rites are not periodical, but only performed on special occasions and at rare intervals; still they are part of the system.

Having thus defined a religion, the author proceeds to the examination of previous theories. He has turned an awkward corner by limiting magic to an individualist application of religious conceptions and practice. It enables him to dispose without difficulty of the theories of Professor Frazer and Dr. Preuss[3]; for the practices which they call magical, though found in all religions from the highest to the lowest, are performed for the general good. The refutation of animism as the source of Religion is the next step. He shows that in Australian society, the lowest hitherto investigated, there is no cult of the dead. This has always been the crux of Spencer's Euhemerism. But the theory of animism does not stand or fall with Spencer's hypothesis. It is necessary therefore to attack Sir Edward Tylor's famous chapters[4]. He repudiates the origin of the belief in the soul or "double" from the phenomena of dreams and other hallucinations, or of syncope, apoplexy, catalepsy, ecstasy, and other cases of temporary insensibility. The idea of the soul, having been once formed, may have been applied to these phenomena; but that is a very different matter. As to dreams, he thinks it probable that the savage always draws a distinction between various kinds of dreams and does not interpret them all in the same way; and he shows that this is actually the case with the Melanesians, as described by Codrington, and the Dieri, as described by Howitt[5]. Even admitting this, I doubt whether he gives enough weight to the vividness of many savage dreams arising from the condition of repletion, or of hunger, in which the savage, who is dependent on the uncertain products of the chase, so often finds himself, or from the sense of constant danger from foes, human or brute, that surround him. Moreover, he seems to think that on the animistic theory the interpretation of dreams as the adventures of the soul is due to speculation on his dreams, whereas the savage is not speculative, but practical. The savage, however, does not necessarily speculate on his dreams; he believes that he has actually seen the objects and undergone the adventures presented to him in dreams. The Arawak headman who awakened Sir Everard im Thurn in the middle of the night to insist, "George speak me very bad, boss; you cut his bits,"[6] had been dreaming of insolence by one of his underlings, and was fully convinced that the unpleasant interview had really taken place and that he had a substantial grievance for his master to redress. Moreover, M. Durkheim passes lightly over the sense of mystery and bewilderment imposed by death. The savage is not a philosophical materialist who holds that there is nothing after death, and it may very well [93] puzzle him to find that his fellow, especially if a bold and trusted leader, is suddenly no more than a senseless and speedily decaying clod. The event would be apt to arouse all his terror and a train of the liveliest emotions, such as the author elsewhere well points out are intensified to an extravagant degree by being shared with the other members of his band. The very atmosphere would be created in which speculation would be generated, and disbelief that all was over with him who was lately so full of life and energy and the stores of manifold experience. And the speculation and disbelief would be greatly stimulated if in his dreams he saw the dead man living, heard his voice, and talked with him.

M. Durkheim, however, will have none of this. Nor will he allow that anthropomorphism is primitive. Man did not, he says, project his image upon the external world; for if so the earliest sacred beings would have borne his likeness. But, in fact, the sacred beings of the lowest society known to us are conceived in an animal or vegetable form. What man did was to confound the

kingdoms of nature—not by any means the same thing. It is only long experience, fortified by scientific culture, that has taught us the barriers between them. But surely if, as the author says, the rocks in primitive thought have a sex and are capable of reproducing their species; if the sun, moon, and stars are men or women who experience and express human sentiments, while, on the other hand, men are conceived as plants or animals; this means that consciousness and personality were attributed to them all, no matter under what form they appeared. This indistinction, which he admits to be at the base of all mythologies, is hard to differentiate from what is by other thinkers called anthropomorphism.

His final argument against animism is that, if it be true, religious beliefs are an hallucination without any objective foundation; a sort of constitutional aberration has caused man to take his dreams for perceptions, death for a prolonged sleep, and rude, shapeless bodies for living and thinking beings. In that case there could be no science of religion; for there would be no reality behind the hallucination, and what sort of a science can it be, the principal discovery of which would dispel the very object of which it treats? But even if we admit, for the sake of argument, that religious beliefs are an hallucination and that there is no object behind them (on which here I express no opinion), the hallucinations themselves are at least an objective fact, and the aim of science is to study these hallucinations as such, and to trace their conditions and evolution, without concerning itself what philosophical basis they may have. They are products of the mental constitution of humanity. If we listen to some philosophers, matter itself is no more than this. Yet scientific students have investigated its constitution and evolution, and have achieved most valuable results, serenely ignoring the philosophers. Nor is it beside the question to observe that, as we shall see, M. Durkheim's own solution of the problem makes the soul and spiritual existences as unreal—in other words, as much hallucinations—as does the animistic theory which he rejects.

We need not linger over his refutation of the sun-myth, or naturalistic theory, as he calls it. It is slaying again the already slain, though the theory yet maintains a ghostly existence in certain quarters. We will come to the exposition of totemism, the main subject of his book. As here expounded, it is not a system of magic, it is not zoolatry, it is not derived from ancestor-worship, nor a case of nature-worship, nor a contrivance to put the soul in safety; it is not to be explained as the consequence of the mere adoption of a name by a group. It is a genuine religion, the most elementary hitherto discovered; and it is bound up with the most elementary form of social organisation. For religion is not simply a social phenomenon, it is society seeking to realise itself. Society cannot exist apart from religion, and men are not men apart from society. The objective, universal and eternal cause of the [94] sensations which go to make up religious experience is society. This it is that develops the moral forces and awakens the feeling of support, safeguard and tutelary dependence which attaches the faithful to his cult. It raises him above himself; it *makes* him. For what makes man man is the totality of intellectual gains which constitute civilisation, and civilisation is the work of society. In totem ism we see the beginning of the process, or at least the earliest form with which we are acquainted. Although the author hedges by declaring that the question whether totemism was once more or less widely distributed is of secondary importance, the argument seems to assume that it must have been universal. The totem is the emblem of the clan, that by which it recognised its unity, itself. This accounts for the fact that the representation of the totem on *churinga, nurtunja, waninga,* and elsewhere, is even more sacred than the totemic species. But alike the totemic species, the representation of the totem, all things associated in the categories with the totem, and the very members of the clan themselves are sacred, though not in the same measure. They are all filled with supernatural force, physical and moral, with *wakan, orenda, mana*, or whatever it may he called. This force is impersonal. It permeates all things. It is at the root of all religions and magic. It is analogous to the scientific concept of force. It is of religious origin, and was indeed borrowed from religion,

first by philosophy, and then by science. Every society exercises power over its members—physical and above all moral power. It keeps them in a sensation of perpetual dependence. It is distinct from the individuals who constitute it, and consequently its interests are distinct from theirs. But as it cannot attain its end save by means of the individual, it makes an imperious claim to his assistance, exacting it even to the sacrifice of his inclinations and interests. Thus at every moment we are obliged to submit to rules of conduct and of thought which we have neither made nor wished to make, and which may even be contrary to our most fundamental instincts. The result is to impress on each individual member the idea that the force thus exercised is external to him.

But in order to make its influence felt society must be "in act"; and it is only in act if the individuals are assembled and act in common. So only it becomes conscious of itself. Australian society passes alternately from the ordinary individual, economic phase to the social phase, and back again. The former is dull and more or less monotonous; the latter causes excitement and vehement exaltation, translated into the wildest and most extravagant actions. The religious activity is confined to these occasions. Since they are centred round the totem, the totem arouses religious forces which dominate and exalt the individual, and which are figured (for we can only represent an abstract and complex idea under a simple concrete form) as an animal or plant, or whatever other object it may be that gives its name to the clan and serves as its emblem. The totem is then nothing else than the clan under a material and emblematic form. The soul is the totemic principle incarnated and individualised in each member of the clan. The idea of the soul cannot be understood except by relation to the idea of force, of *mana*, which has its genesis in the impersonal action of society on the individual. Dreams may have contributed certain secondary characteristics, but they are not the source of the idea of the soul. The exclusively individual and indivisible idea of the soul is late, and the result of philosophical reflection.

The origin of religion, therefore, is not in fear, nor is it caused by the sensations awakened in us by the external world. Neither is it due to hallucination. It is indeed an error for the Australian black fellow to attribute to an external power in the form of an animal or plant the exaltation, the increase of vitality, he experiences when engaged in the performance of the totemic rites. But the error merely extends to the symbol, not to the reality. The reality is the society, the clan, which really does thus inspire him. The function of the rites is in fact to strengthen the bonds of the [95] individual to the society. By this means religious excitement adds to the forces of life. Religious force is only the sentiment inspired by the collectivity in its members, projected from the consciousness and objectivated, it matters not on what. The object to be sure is nothing but a symbol. But a symbol is necessary to the consciousness of belonging to a certain society. It is not an artifice; it is spontaneous. It must, however, be capable of being figured, and must be familiar. Animals particularly, but also plants (and animals and plants are the most usual totems) fulfil this condition. Probably the totem was suggested by the animal that haunted the centre frequented by the clan; and in that event the spot became a totemic centre, such as we find in Central Australia. But the various clans of a tribe must have come to some understanding with one another to secure variety of choice. It thus appears that the choice of a totem was not spontaneous, but a deliberate act.

We may, perhaps, draw the inference that in M. Durkheim's view the origin of religion was in a conscious and deliberate act. There must, therefore, have been a period when religion did not exist. If so, society was still in an inchoate state; it had not yet made an effort to realise itself. But then we are driven back upon the question, What caused it to make the effort? What awoke the consciousness of the need of organisation? It could not have been the pressure of hostile groups, because *ex hypothesi* the adjacent groups were friendly: they came to an agreement as to the choice of totems. "The totemic organisation, such as we have just described it, must manifestly have been the result of a sort of understanding between all the members of a tribe without

distinction. It is impossible that each clan should have made for itself its beliefs in an absolutely independent manner. The cults of the different totems must of necessity have been in some way adjusted to one another, for they exactly complete one another" (p. 221)[7]. These words are emphatic. And although it would be hypercritical to press the meaning of the word tribe beyond a vague inclusive term for the surrounding and larger body of men, still the use of the word does after all suggest some sort of organisation. However rudimentary this organisation, or whatever form it took, it was *pro tanto* an attempt of the society to realise itself. But that is religion. What, then, was the religion that preceded the higher organisation we call totemism?

I have pointed out that the argument seems to assume the universality of totemism as the earliest form of religion. In addition to what has appeared in the course of the very imperfect analysis I have been able to give of M. Durkheim's theory, and of the reasoning that supports it, the explanation of the soul as the totemic principle incarnated and individualised in each member of the clan accounts for the conception of the soul under the form of an animal. This conception is common, not merely in totemic areas, but far outside them, even in Europe itself. If the cause assigned be correct it affords a presumption of the universality of totemism. But this is not all; for from conceiving the soul under the form of an animal to the doctrine of transmigration is not a very long step. Thus the wide belief in metempsychosis is a new proof that the constituent elements of the idea of the soul have been chiefly borrowed from the animal kingdom in the manner supposed. In other words, totemism is at the base of it, and must, therefore, have been universal.

The space already occupied precludes the possibility of discussing the author's very lucid and elaborate exposition of the totemic rites and beliefs. They are best known to us as practised and believed in Central Australia, because there they have been most thoroughly investigated. M. Durkheim is under no illusion as to the totemism of the Arunta being primitive in its present form. But he holds it to be a less developed form than that of the south-eastern tribes, where it has evolved High Gods, Daramulun and the rest, who are the personification of the initiation rites performed by the whole tribe collectively assembled, and are a symbol of the [96] unity of the tribe. Totems and gods alike, and indeed all other objects of a cult, are thus not hallucinations, but symbols. Inasmuch, however, as they are taken for objective realities, the distinction seems somewhat fine. The clan-totem, he holds, was the starting point; the soul was derived from it; and he argues very ably that the individual totem and the sex-totem were subsequent developments. His exposition is primarily concerned with Australian totemism; but he vindicates the essential identity of American totemism, while pointing out its differences, and claims the right to illustrate his points from the North American tribes. To this extent his work may be considered an answer to recent objections to the very existence of totemism as a system, and is all the more effective because it is founded primarily on what is called in the scientific jargon of the objectors an "intensive" study of a single area.

Nor can I follow him in detail through the philosophical argument with which he brings the exposition to a close. He finds in the collectivity much more than the source of religion. Without it even thought would be impossible. Logic is a product of social life. We could not form a concept apart from social life. Concepts express the manner in which society represents things. And inasmuch as man would not be man apart from social life, conceptual thought is coeval with humanity. Without it man would be on a level with the lower animals. The conflict between sense and reason, between morality and will, is not due to the Fall. It is due to the contention between the personal and the impersonal in everyone. There is something impersonal in us, because there is something social; and as social life includes both representations and practices, this impersonality naturally extends alike to ideas and to acts. A new path is thus opened to the Science of Man. It is no longer necessary to explain man's superior and specific faculties on the one hand by referring them to inferior forms of being, or on the other hand by ascribing them to

a supra-experimental reality, postulated but never established by observation. When it is recognised that above man there is society, and that society is not a mere name, a creation of reason, but a system of active forces, a new manner of explaining man becomes possible.

This sketch represents very feebly and imperfectly the contents of a book that is bound to leave a mark upon anthropological thought. We in England have perhaps hitherto made too little of the influence of society in the genesis of religion. We have attributed it too exclusively to the influence of external nature and the experiences of individual life upon what is assumed, rightly or wrongly, to be the constitution of the human mind. Whether the French sociological school, led by M. Durkheim, may not go to the opposite extreme, may not attach too little weight to this influence and these experiences, and in effect ignore the part actually played by the individual, is a question that the discussion inevitably awakened by a presentation so powerful of the claims of society to be the fountain of religion must decide. I should add, to avoid misapprehension, that the social, so far as they may be distinguished from the religious, institutions of the Australian blackfellow, have been left over to form the subject of another study.

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NOTES

1. [« Définition du phénomène religieux et de la religion », Durkheim 1912 : livre 1, chap. 1, p. 65]
2. [« Les principales conceptions de la religion élémentaire », Durkheim 1912 : livre 1, chap. 2, p. 89]
3. [Durkheim renvoie à la série d'articles de Konrad Theodor Preuss, « Der Ursprung der Religion und Kunst », *Globus. Illustrierte Zeitschrift Für Länder- Und Völkerkunde*, 86, 1904, p. 321-27, 355-63, 375-79, 388-392 et 1905, 87, p. 333,37, 347-50, 380-84, 394-400, 413-419]
4. [Dans la traduction française de *Primitive Culture* qu'utilise Durkheim, il s'agit de la longue série de chapitres suivante : Edward Burnett Tylor, « Animisme », *La civilisation primitive*, trad. de l'anglais sur la deuxième édition par Mme Pauline Brunet et Ed. Barbier, tome 1, Paris, C. Reinwald, 1876, chap. 11, p. 483-584 et tome 2, 1878, chap. 12-17, p. 1-466]
5. [Durkheim utilise notamment les travaux de Robert Henry Codrington, *The Melanesians. Studies in their Anthropology and Folk-Lore, with Illustrations* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1891, xv-419 p.) ; Robert Henry Codrington et Lorimer Fison, « Notes on the Customs of Mota, Banks Islands [Communicated 10th July, 1879] », *Transactions and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria*, 16, 1880, p. 119-143 et Lorimer Fison, Alfred William Howitt, *Kamilaroi and Kurnai. Group-Marriage and Relationship, and Marriage by Elopement. Drawn chiefly from the usage of the Australian Aborigines, also The Kurnai Tribe. Their customs in Peace and War* (Melbourne/Sydney/Adelaide/Brisbane, George Robertson, 1880, 372 p.) et Alfred William Howitt, « The Dieri and other kindred Tribes of Central Australia », *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 20, 1891 ; p. 30-104]

6. [Everard F. Im Thurn, « On the Animism of the Indians of British Guiana », *The Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, 11, 1882, p. 364-365 : « In the middle of one night I was awakened by an Arawak named Sam, the captain or headman of my Indians, only to be told the bewildering words, “George speak me very bad, boss; you cut his bits.” It was some time before I could sufficiently collect my senses to remember that “bits” or fourpenny pieces, are the units in which, amonf Creoles and semi-civilised Indians, calculations of money, and consequently of wages, is made; that “to cut bits” means to reduce the number of bits or the wages given; and to understand that Sam, as captain, having dreamed that George, his subordinate, had spoken impudently to him, the former, with a fine sense of the dignity of his position, now insited that the culprit should be punished in real life. »]

7. [Orig.] « Au reste, l’organisation totémique, telle que nous venons de la décrire, doit manifestement résulter d’une sorte d’entente entre tous les membres de la tribu indistinctement. Il est impossible que chaque clan se soit fait ses croyances d’une manière absolument indépendante ; mais il faut, de toute nécessité, que les cultes des différents totems aient été, en quelque sorte, ajustés les uns aux autres puisqu’ils se complètent exactement. », Durkheim 1912, « Les croyances proprement totémiques. Le système cosmologique du totémisme et la notion de genre », livre 2, chap. 3, p. 221-222]